

Point Three

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The monthly magazine of TOC H



Point Three

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Opinions expressed (including the editorial) are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Toc H Movement.

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(Telephone: 0296 623911.)

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Toc H is a Movement of people who seek to build friendships, and offer service, across the barriers that usually divide us from one another. The basic unit is the group – at best a good cross-section of the local neighbourhood – which meets together regularly, and seeks to serve the community around it. Toc H was founded in 1915 by the Rev P B 'Tubby' Clayton, and since then has been providing opportunities for people to test the Christian way by practical experiment.

All members pledge themselves to try:

1. To welcome all in friendship and lessen by habit of thought, word and deed the prejudices which separate people.
2. To give personal service.
3. To find their own convictions while listening with respect to the views of others.
4. To acknowledge the spiritual nature of man and to test the Christian way by trying it.

This magazine is a forum for ideas about Toc H and about the world as well as a record of Toc H service. Its title derives from the third of these Four Points.

Cover picture

Ray Cox and Arthur Montgomery at the Marafun.

Photo: Judi Edwards

Editorial

Words, words, words!

There are few contexts in which words do not have some part to play, and communication without them is unimaginable. Even in those least verbal forms of communication, art and music, artists and composers almost always use a title, and quite often need to write lengthy explanations of their work!

Words, either in speech or in writing, are our most familiar tool for communicating with each other, and perhaps it is in that very familiarity that the danger lies, for it must be said that we sometimes use words carelessly and without proper thought. Some areas of life contain more pitfalls than others, and one of the chief among these is faith and worship. The danger to which we are most liable is that of attempting to express our insights into faith and our preferred patterns of worship as though they were graven in stone and would last for all eternity. We choose not to remember that the words and faith alike are living things, and as such will develop and change. That the language changes must be evident to anyone who gives it a moment's thought. Thomas Cranmer was well aware of the changing nature of language, and was very clear that the liturgy should be revised at least every 100 years in order that it should continue to be 'in a language understood by the people'. It would horrify him to know that the Church of England was still using his prayer book after only one small revision! Much of his beautiful English is obscure and difficult now, and the meaning can be hard to catch.

Many of us are listening with some astonishment to the debate which is continuing to surround the Bishop of Durham and 'his' theology. The astonishment arises partly because it's all so familiar. A theologian called Bultmann was asking much more searching questions and making more disturbing statements in the 1940s and 50s, and John Robinson's 'Honest to God', which raised such a furore in its own time, was published nearly 25 years ago! David Jenkins is saying nothing which theologians and bishops haven't said several times already in the last 40 years. So perhaps the argument is foundering each time because of the words we use. For instance, much of the discussion is homing in on the issue of the Virgin Birth. Our understanding of the word 'Virgin' is so deeply ingrained that it simply doesn't occur to us that it might once have had a rather different meaning. Yet to suppose that it can have survived 2,000 years of use and several translations without even the most subtle of changes taking place is ridiculous. Language used to be less precise, which meant that individual words had more shades and subtleties of meaning than contemporary English does, and in the Jewish tradition into which Jesus was born the word 'Virgin' meant a young woman or girl who had not yet had a child. Obviously it is at least possible that when the early church talked about the Virgin Birth it was not making a statement of biological fact in the sense that we would now understand it, but was saying something about the nature of God's relationship with man.

The Anglican Bishops have been unable to resist the pressure to make an authoritative statement on Faith and the Church. It has been variously described on the one hand as clarifying the issue and on the other as muddying the waters still further! That breadth of response is inevitable, but the real danger in which the reports stands is that it will be taken as a kind of 'Ex Cathedra' statement which will stand for ever. The constant, and sometimes rapid, changes which take place in our language will mean that it will need constant revision and interpretation if it is to be of any value in ten years' time, let alone in a hundred.

The trick would seem to be to find contemporary language in which to express the truth, which will neither jettison the past nor deny the possibility of future developments. That's not an easy trick to work, but without it statements and formularies can become, at best, monuments to the beauties of a language of the past, and at worst a tyrannical block on thought and development in the future. The security of fixed forms of words which say it all for ever is an illusion we must grow out of if we are to continue to communicate with each other about those things which matter most deeply.

CRR

Toc H National Youth Weekend

24-26 May 1986

Judi Edwards

Photos: Judi Edwards



The aim of the weekend was to bring together people from all over the country to share an experience of fun, fellowship, hard work, discussion and person-power for the organisers of the Great Straits Raft Run.

Forty young people from a variety of backgrounds and Toc H experience gathered at the Toc H Centre, Port Penrhyn, which proved an ideal base for the weekend. The group worked hard on a variety of manual tasks in preparation for the Raft Run, (and constructed two rafts!). Saturday evening was spent programme 'selling' in the local pubs, which was fun but hard work and highly organised so that every pub in the locality was covered!

During the weekend there were three discussion sessions, based on concerns and comments about Toc H. These were most stimulating and were entered into in an energetic but thoughtful way. Discussions were held in large and small groups, and topics covered included:

- Is there an insufficient mix of people in Toc H?
- How can young people influence decision making?
- How should the resources of the Movement be used?
- How can the age gap in Toc H be bridged?
- What prejudices exist in the Movement?
- Can old traditions and new ideas be combined in Toc H today?



Each discussion ended with the emphasis on action and the purpose of these discussions was not just to enjoy talking, but to inspire and renew commitment and energy with a view to using these discussions as a springboard to future activities.

There was also time to reflect and be quiet during the weekend, an important aspect of Toc H activities. An optional time of prayer was held on the Sunday morning, as well as a Quiet Session for all, giving the opportunity to look at our spiritual side, the Fourth Point of the Compass, and to share this with each other.

The culmination of the weekend was the Great Straits Raft Run when the group acted as stewards, raffle ticket and programme sellers, face painters - to

name but a few of the jobs! To the group's delight, the Toc H National Youth Weekend all female team won the trophy in that category of the race, on one of the rafts built the day before!

I'm aware that I haven't had the space to mention many of the activities of the weekend (participation in the Sport Aid Mountain Run for example) - but do talk to the participants to find out more! Thanks must go to all who were involved, be they organisers, participants, Raft Race entrants, or programme buyers!

Hard work, fellowship, fun and open sharing were important ingredients in this weekend, and for me this was a timely reminder of the excitement, depth, commitment and talent amongst the young people in Toc H today.

Round and about

Helping the old folk

How often do you hear some bright and breezy octogenarian listing, among his or her interests, 'helping the old folk?' I Don't know if any of the members of Gillingham Branch have reached their 80s yet, but according to Chairman David Rumsay, certainly some are pensioners. Like many another older Branch, however, age doesn't seem to have curtailed their activities much, including entertaining some 80 old folk to tea! David says *'We put alarm systems into their homes, and take sufferers from Multiple Sclerosis to their local centre. We could do with a few more helpers - some of us are pensioners ourselves!'*



A life's work

After 37 years in Africa combatting leprosy, Roland 'Husky' Huskinson is not prepared to retire quietly and call it a day. Derbyshire-born Husky urges people to do all they can to help LEPRO, the British Leprosy Relief Association. He joined Toc H in 1944 while stationed in Cairo with the Royal Artillery. After being demobbed Husky answered Toc H's call for volunteers to help with leprosy work. His first post was at the Itu leper colony in southern Nigeria, easing the suffering of 4,500 patients who were, as Husky puts it, 'crippled by the disease and ostracised by their relatives and friends'. After meeting and marrying his wife Edith he was transferred to northern Nigeria to help co-ordinate the work of missions and government bodies. A decade later more than 260,000 patients were receiving treatment in the region's 2,000 clinics. Despite civil wars and political turmoil in the continent, Husky continued this work in Nigeria, Uganda and Sierra Leone until he returned to England in 1982. Husky, who now lives in Essex, said: 'Research continues and work on a vaccine which we sorely need to protect the children of future generations also progresses. We must go on until this crippling disease, claiming as it does over 12 million of the world's population, is eradicated'.

On the move again

Toc H in Norwich is on the march! The Toc H In Touch Group joined with members of the Youth Hostel Association in a 20 mile sponsored walk. The result of their efforts was a total of £350 raised to help with holidays for the physically handicapped. No doubt there was also a good line in blisters afterwards!

A fresh perspective

It is said that familiarity breeds contempt! While that may be rather too strong to describe what can happen to long-standing members of Toc H it is certainly true that for many the early thrill of discovery gives way to an unthinking acceptance which can sometimes border on the cynical! So it is genuinely refreshing to meet people who are new to Toc H, and who see it from their own fresh perspective. The excitement can affect young and old alike. I hope I shall always remember the slightly bemused enthusiasm of a young social worker in Milton Keynes who couldn't get over finding 'an organisation which exists to do what needs doing!' I have recently received a letter from someone who - I am sure she won't mind me saying - comes rather closer to the other end of the age range. In a life still full of activity she has met Toc H in Margate, and is thrilled by what she has found. Could it be that the best cure for the doldrums is to introduce a new person to Toc H as often as you can? It might help to keep your delight alive.

Handing jobs on

Lawrie Wilkes writes from Broadway to tell us that the Flashing Light scheme, which the Branch has run for 12 years, has come to an end - not because the Branch can no longer cope, but because the local Council has now installed its own alarm system. Unlike most Branch jobs we always hope that the flashing lights will never have to be used once they have been installed. They must be a healthy lot in Broadway because Lawrie writes that the Branch can 'bow out thankful that the service was never used in an emergency!'

In Looe of Jumble Sales!

Toc H in Looe, in Cornwall, appears to have hit upon a novel publicity stunt! It seems that at a recent jumble sale some items were sold by mistake - something which is generally quite easy to do, as anyone who has ever been involved in running a jumble sale will know. I remember one over-enthusiastic salesman disposing of both our church lawnmowers on one occasion - at a 'knock-down price!'. However, Looe seem to have a much more interesting variation which, as far as I know, is all their own, for they have had to admit to selling underwear by mistake! How they came by it, and how it came to be sold by mistake, remains a mystery. It has certainly led to one of the more interesting articles in a local paper which has come our way some time.

Crocus Fields at Poacher's Den

No, Toc H is not getting into agriculture! Ruth Tilley has written to tell us about a Weekend Project at the Poacher's Den with a group of mentally handicapped children. ('Crocus Fields' is the name of the home where the children came from.) It was a weekend which got off to a good start. Ruth writes: *'After arriving at Poacher's Den and having a supper of fried egg butties (!) the next task was putting the kids to bed. I would say that out of all the things we did on the weekend, that was the hardest. It took four volunteers to put one child to bed!'*

On Saturday, in spite of rain, they all went off to Skegness, and got back to the Centre laden with rock, presents and rainwater - 'so we got changed and in the evening we had a barbeque organised by a special school in Spalding. All the kids and volunteers enjoyed this and mixed well with all at the school, playing

Towards the New Generation

Part Two John Mitchell

In the July issue of Point Three I gave 'early warning' of a major proposal that is expected to come before Central Council, this November. I explained that the underlying proposition was that the priority for Toc H was the urgent need to transmit Toc H to the younger generation and that, for a five-year period, we should give this priority major emphasis through the development of Toc H Projects. I promised that in this issue I would outline in more detail what have been suggested as methods of doing that, as part of a co-ordinated plan.

The 'development' of Projects includes two strands. One is that we must take effective steps to help young people develop a deeper and longer commitment to Toc H and what it stands for. This means we must keep in touch with them better, link them more fully into the Family, challenge them to take greater responsibility for it, and lead them towards some form of more local involvement, in an ongoing group. It is the area we loosely call 'follow-up', and it is an area which is weak at present.

The other strand of development relates to the quality of the actual Projects. Toc H, at its best, is a real mixture of people, and

the Toc H experience only has real dynamism when people are encountering, in fellowship, those they would not normally meet. We must constantly strive to broaden the mixture in Projects, as well as local units, and resist the temptation to huddle into safe groups of like-minded people. Projects at present appeal to a limited range of volunteer, and there is urgent need to broaden the recruitment base so we include volunteers from sections of society who do not yet meet us, especially ethnic minorities. Hand-in-hand with that there is also the need to broaden the type of Project, at present limited to work with children, the handicapped and in conservation. We need to widen that and to explore new types of activity in challenging new situations. To meet both these strands of development, a co-ordinated programme is necessary. At the time of writing, the major areas are the ones I list below, and most of these will probably feature in the set of Resolutions which Central Council will be asked to consider.

National Project Centre

It is suggested that we set up a national project centre. The location is a matter for debate, but clearly must be at the most appropriate place for its functions. It would be the co-ordination centre where full records were kept, and referrals made, as part of the improved 'follow-up'. It could provide a 'shop-window' for Toc H and especially Toc H work with young people. It could be a 'drop-in' centre for young people (and that clearly places it in a venue with good public transport). It would clearly house the necessary staff to cover the 'co-ordination' role, but in addition could be the base for 'development' staff, from which they could go out and work with Regions in the setting up of new types of work, the broadening of the recruiting areas, and so on. They could also encourage co-ordination and interaction between Regions, especially with regard to training and standards. They could liaise with other appropriate organisations, and provide a full network of information about Toc H opportunities, and resources, both within the Movement and outside. They would also be available to service and advise the National Project Forum (see below).

One current suggestion is that we build a team of four staff people, all based at this centre and working from it. One would be an office keeper, to do the nuts and bolts of co-ordination, records etc. The other three would be development staff, travelling widely and working with Regions. There will, no doubt, be other suggestions as to the size of the staff team, and its location and shape. This is one of the areas that needs full debate.

National Project Forum

While staff would clearly have an important role in the development of Projects, it is essential that it is not just a staff job in isolation. There seems to be a real need for some sort of national representative body, a 'Forum', which can co-ordinate views about development, standards, training, communications etc, and make recommendations to the Central Executive Committee. This would not be an entirely new idea — at various times in the past we have had an annual 'Projects Conference' and a national 'Youth Committee'. There are, in fact, many facets of current project work for which no one group takes responsibility, and if we are to take the development of projects seriously, we have to make sure there is a structure appropriate to that as well. The type of forum would obviously be a matter for discussion. How big should it be? How elected? Should it be deemed a sub-committee to the Central Executive? Should it have a budget? There are many areas for discussion.

Regional Administration

It is suggested that, to free both staff and lay leaders from day-to-day administration, we find finance (from Toc H funds or, preferably, from other sources) for each Region to have a part-time administrator/secretary to do this. This is clearly a priority for Region: without staff, but there is also concern at the sheer volume of time field staff spend 'riding typewriters' on simple administrative work. Whether or not this role might be wide enough to cover more general Regional administration must be discussed, but that would help to avoid the risks of Projects being seen as a separate development, and keep it in closer touch with traditional Toc H expressions.

Review of Staff Briefs

Clearly, the work outlined above, and the staff appointments, cannot operate in isolation. It would be appropriate therefore to review all staff briefs to see to what extent they can be adjusted to make a contribution to this major thrust. While there is no intention of trying to

on mini inflatables, football, and so on'.

The weekend was over all too soon, but one more thing had to be done before they set off for Nottingham and home. Friday had been Ruth's birthday, and '... I heard everyone shouting my name. I had to sit in the middle of the room, and all the kids and helpers sang Happy Birthday and gave me a card. I was so touched, and it finished the weekend off well'.

It was Ruth's first project, and she says how much she gained from the experience. She is, she says, 'looking forward to the next project'.

Mr Jones

Harry Graham was a poet who sometimes wrote rather amusing verse. I came across this one recently:

There's been an accident!' they said,
'Your servant's cut in half, he's dead!'
'Indeed!' said Mr Jones, 'and please,
Send me the half that's got my keys.'

Towards the New Generation Part Two continued

turn all staff into project specialists, it is important that there is broad staff involvement, just as it is important that the development involves Branch members as far as possible.

Resources

(a) These proposals would cost money. It would be silly to suggest otherwise. There would be capital outlay on the National Project Centre, and running costs for that, staff salaries and expenses etc. The average cost of a member of field staff today is £13,000, which includes car, expenses and other incidental costs. So three specialist Project Development staff would cost nearly £40,000 per annum. If people see this as just an increase in our deficit, it will be depressing and, maybe, unacceptable. I hope it will be seen as

investing in the future, and that is a better perspective, for what better use could we make of our resources than to spend them on giving Toc H to the new generation? It should also be noted that a major initiative like this is the sort of thing that would make it easier to raise funds from outside Toc H, by effective appeals. It is also fair to expect that if we work increasingly in the inner-city, we shall be able to tap the vast funds that Government are making available in those areas.

(b) Both staff and lay leaders need training, and we would need more of this if these proposals go through. This would cost money. We must also be ready to 'prime the pump' for new experiments.

(c) Our national Training and Conference Centres are a big resource. We

would need a serious debate about how they fit into this thrust. Any review of Centres should take into account the training and conference needs that this new thrust would have.

* * * * *

As I explained above, these suggestions will be subject to modification and refashioning before they are presented to Council as Resolutions. The Working Party is already starting to do that. However, the general drift will probably remain broadly the same, so it is well worthwhile discussing these ideas, and telling your Central Councillor what you think. In turn, Council may modify them, accept them, or reject them. What is vital is that, if they are accepted, it is in the light of full discussion locally beforehand, so that a Yes vote will be a cue for action, not protest!

GETTING TOCH KNOWN

Writing Press Releases – Some simple guidelines

Arthur Montgomery

Try to get to know key personnel in your local media – you will achieve better local coverage – specially on TV and Local Radio.

There are three key facts to remember about Press Release material:

1. It must be of genuine interest to the readers of the publication(s) to which it is sent.
2. It must be timely and arrive before the relevant copy date.
3. It should be prepared in such a way as to make it easy to use.

Otherwise it will almost always end up on the 'hold file', or in the recipient's waste paper basket!

Here are some useful guidelines:

- (a) Always use printed letterhead paper, and preferably a special letterhead marked 'Press Release'. Consider using a coloured paper for extra impact. If your release goes to more than one sheet, use the letterhead paper again for it may become detached.
- (b) Always type double-spacing – it makes your material much easier to sub-edit.
- (c) Never include a headline – sub-editors write these. Sometimes you may wish to use a title, but always repeat this in the first few lines, in case the title gets subbed out.
- (d) Assemble your facts in descending order of importance, in case the story is cut.

(e) Always write the material with the reader in mind.

(f) Always finish with 'For further information contact . . . (name and telephone number)', if this is not pre-printed at the base of your Press Release paper. You may give more than one contact and, if necessary, an out-of-hours telephone number.

(g) Always list any enclosures, either photographs, brochures or cuttings.

The material should be read carefully for accuracy and checked with your colleagues, according to your normal policy.

Picture Captions

Sometimes the Press Release is simply a picture caption, but it is often necessary to enclose a picture caption or captions with the main release.

The following points apply about captions:

- (a) They should describe the picture, and, often, the reason for it.
- (b) They should not exceed 100 words.
- (c) They should always list people from left to right.
- (d) They can either be stuck on the back of the picture or featured on paper which folds out from the picture to show the words. Never write the caption on the back of the picture.

Pictures

The picture(s) to be sent out are normally

One of the most important sources of publicity for Toc H can be your local newspaper, radio or regional television service. Yet it is clear from so many of the press cuttings which cross this Editor's desk that alarmingly few people have any idea of how to make the most of the opportunities which the media offer. Arthur Montgomery, in charge of Public Relations and Fund Raising at Headquarters spent many years with the Thompson Group of Newspapers, and he has set out some guidelines which, if followed, will give you a much greater chance of improved press coverage. And please remember – include Point Three in your mailing list!

chosen from strips of contact prints of all the pictures taken at the time. Choose the best, most relevant picture, and order the prints, which should be at least postcard size. As most will be black and white pictures, look for clear definition and good contrast in the chosen picture. As most Press Releases are 'happy' events, it helps if the subjects are smiling!

If colour pictures are used, remember that if the publication is going to reproduce them in black and white – red comes out as black and blue won't re-photograph!

Addressing

You should have three lists:

1. Media – with address details in as many places and publications as possible.
2. Local – mainly local TV, radio, newspapers and magazines.



Marafun '86



Photos: Rob Cole

On Sunday 1 June the North London District held their third annual Marafun at Trent Park, Barnet.

As in the previous two years it rained nearly all the previous day rendering the site decidedly soggy! However, our stalwart Chief Organiser, Don Henley with his able assistants, arrived on site in the early hours of Sunday morning to erect the marquees. This was done in record time, great expertise displayed this year with no collapsed tents after half an hour's solid effort!

The course was soon marked out, refreshment tent put into operation and everything completed ready for the 11am mass start. We were very pleased to welcome an impressive group from HQ led by Arthur Montgomery and as usual our Bedford and Kempston teams gave us their loyal support. Also attending were representatives from Toc H Community House, Newark Street, SE Regional Office, Royal Navy, and many other individual participants.

There was a four mile circuit also a half mile 'fun' track. Several of our younger (and some not so young!) folk managed the Marathon and others very nearly, whilst some preferred the somewhat easier tarmac 'fun' track.

Sport Aid had obviously affected the response this year but from the promises of sponsorship received, and cash already to hand from refreshments, tombola etc it is hoped to nett about £1,500, one third of which will be distributed to the charity of the entrant's choice and two-thirds to family purse.

We wish to thank sincerely all those who participated in any way to the success of this venture and we look forward to an even bigger turn-out in 1987.

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3. Internal — informing your colleagues.

Releases should be sent to the *News Editor* of each publication and, if relevant, a copy to the *Features Editor* or *Woman's Editor* if the item is of particular interest to those sections of the publication.

Records

Always keep a file copy of the material you send out and cuttings of the materials published. If most of what you send gets in it is because it is interesting, timely and well prepared.

If your material is printed — always check it against your file copy, for accuracy etc.

WITNESS TODAY

The Fourth Dimension

Padre Ken Bloxham
(Staff Padre 1934-1953)

In the 1950s that prophetic little Padre of Toc H, Herbert Leggate, affectionately remembered by so many of us, used to call attention to the popular idea of Toc H held by many people outside, that it was a Christian organisation which was popular and made 'bearable' for them because it engaged in very human activities not usually associated with the Churches! Against this, some thought of it as a secular organisation made respectable by regular spots of a religious nature; its meetings, for instance, often ended with family prayers, and a mystical ceremony called 'Light' was held in a darkened and silent room.

Both, of course, are a travesty of Toc H. The first because it suggests that those 'outside activities' do not fall within the province of religion, and the second, and to me more objectionable, which assumes that our specific Christian moments are there just to give 'tone' or respectability to the whole Movement!

It would help many of us to reply to that difficult question 'What is Toc H?' if we were to remember those things which brought us into this Family. For myself, a young assistant minister in a large and successful Methodist Church, it was just those activities which the Churches of that time seemed to neglect which challenged me, and drew me in. Plus a fellowship which transcended the rather

more closed membership of my own Church. It was hearing Tubby Clayton describe Toc H as 'seven-day-a-week Christianity', and his account of how this Faith had triumphed over the squalor and dangers of trench warfare in World War One; of ordinary men who were transformed by learning to *practice* their creed. Their discovery? — that because they were engaged in a bloody and insane war God had not disappeared: indeed, they remembered that Jesus Christ faced just such a challenge as He looked at the Cross. He took it into Himself, used it and beat it, so that defeat in the eyes of men became victory, despair turned to hope, and his very sorrow bred a holy gaiety. Amidst the agony and ugliness of the Ypres Salient Talbot House came to stand for peace, friendliness and purpose — virtues sadly lacking round there.

These discoveries of Talbot House were reborn in the 1920s in Toc H. You may well ask, but how did that happen? Tubby was then lecturing candidates for the Anglican ministry at Knutsford Test School: no posh social Committees were set up or appeals made for funds or any endowment. And yet in 37 towns and villages of this country groupings of men calling themselves 'The Fellowship of Talbot House' began. And why? — because they saw that those truths they had loved in Talbot House were as desperately needed in that post-war world

as ever in the days of conflict. The killing might have stopped, but men were still at variance; there were still the outcasts, the poor, the unhappy and the lonely. Simple friendship was desperately needed, the outstretched hand of help, and the enlarged vision of a world in which God was still at work, using all sorts of people and organisations to do His work. It is not so strange that I find a remarkable parallel to our Toc H experience in the closing words of a book by that great modern missionary, Albert Schweitzer, of Lambarene, West Africa — 'He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old by the lake He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same words, "Follow thou Me", and sets us the tasks which He has to fulfil in our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they will pass through in His fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery they shall learn in their own experience who He is'.

This phrase 'To Witness Humbly' comes from the Main Resolution of Toc H, a supplement to the Royal Charter of 1922, whose legalistic terms carefully omitted all mention of its Christian commitment. 'Remembering with gratitude how God used the Old House to bring home to multitudes of men that

Superstition —or Powerful Vision?

James Power

Fellowship, Service, Fairmindedness — these three points of the Toc H compass are pretty uncontroversial, and we can agree with them without too much argument, although actually carrying them out may be slightly more challenging as Liz Jones demonstrates in her contribution to this series of articles (May issue). The Fourth Point may be more difficult. The 'Kingdom of God' — what does it mean? Surely the other three points are sufficient without having to get into the superstitious, spiritual stuff. After all, as soon as we bring religion into all this, that's when the arguments start, and in our modern multi-cultural society whose God are we talking about anyway?

Well, without the Fourth Point I would suggest that our compass might become pretty directionless. If we leave God out of our endeavours we very quickly lose the standard against which we must judge ourselves and against which the world is judged. There is sometimes a tendency among my contemporaries in Toc H to ignore the beginnings of the Movement, which are vital for a true understanding of what we are about today. Toc H is a living example of the central truth of Christianity: resurrection comes out of crucifixion. Out of the horrors of the First World War grew a conviction that there must be better ways of ordering our affairs than by bloody battle. That

conviction found its focus in the life of Talbot House, and most particularly in the Upper Room, the house chapel. Here in the midst of the hell of the Flanders fields men came to an understanding of Jesus' words to his apostles on that first Easter evening in the first Upper Room, '*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you*'. In our modern, war torn, nuclear world that message still confronts us.

It is that message that we carry with us today. The Kingdom of God is revealed wherever that message and vision is being lived out. It means nothing more or nothing less than living out the standards of the Gospel so succinctly set out in the first three points of the compass — but it means living them in a sacrificial way, just as Jesus did. That may seem a bit pious, but it is only in the giving of self to others that the vision can be truly lived out. That is how Jesus lived and died and that must be the basis of all expressions

This is the final pair of articles in our series on the Four Points. Ken Bloxham is a Methodist Minister, and was a Padre on the staff of Toc H from 1934-1953. He continues to be actively involved as an Hon Staff member in the Southern Region. James Power was the first LTV at John Perkins House in Nottingham. He went on to Mirfield to train for the Anglican Ministry.

behind the ebb and flow of things temporal stand the eternal realities . . . and so on, ending with the Four Points of the Compass. Enshrined in Toc H and its ideas is a very high doctrine of *man* – that he is not of the brute creation, allied to the ape and tiger, but
'Great arm-fellow of God,
To the ancestral clod kin –
And to cherubim.' (Francis Thompson)
This was the glory of the Old House; Tubby used all and sundry, of any rank, to further his ministry there, and in the work which followed in Toc H we discovered the same splendour – that in ordinary men are gifts and ideas, resources and a loyalty, which as the Psalm says, put him 'a little lower than the angels'. Do any of you remember the words of J B Priestley in one of his war-time 'Postscripts', – 'The true saints and heroes of this war, whose courage, patience and good humour stand like a rock above the dark morass of treachery, cowardice and panic, are ordinary British folk . . . They've given me more than I could ever give you, courage – and the faith in what we can achieve after this war'.

I believe that all those things which are dear to the Toc H of today, projects, adventure courses, care for the handicapped, a new order of society in which men shall share things fairly and without envy, can only be achieved in a *Christian* society; that Fellowship, Service, Fairmindedness demand the fourth aim – the Kingdom of God. Our witness then is to the power and truth of

the Christian Faith, and to our own personal loyalty to Jesus and His standards. That our service is ultimately *Christian* service, to be rendered valiantly, and in the spirit of the Toc H prayer – 'Teach us to live together in love and joy and peace; to check all bitterness; to disown discouragement; to practise thanksgiving, and to leap with joy to any task for others'.

One historical point; it was this accepted attitude of Toc H in its early days which made it a practical and welcome handmaid to the Churches. We were not suspect as some sort of new sect. Our leader was known as a Christian priest who in the exercise of his ministry had brought this astonishing Family into being. So in turn the Churches gladly sent us men for our staff work, believing they would be trained for wider ministries than parish work (I instance our Chaplains to the Tanker Fleet, or work in Leper colonies) for they recognised the Franciscan element in much we were doing with the poor, the unemployed, with rebellious youngsters, or 'lost' men and women.

Toc H in its turn sought never to outrun the established Churches in the expression of its faith or practice. We had a most wonderful and close fellowship within Toc H, but as the Churches then did not allow inter-communion, we never (even within the staff) allowed it in our worship. Had we deliberately flouted the Churches then we should have become known as 'the intercommunion lot', a

rebel society. Despite the impatience of many of our members we bore with the separation, feeling the 'chains which bound us', and so witnessed more effectively, I believe, to the need for that unity. Perhaps this was one element in the decision of the Archbishop of Canterbury to present the wealthy living of All Hallows, Tower Hill, to the Revd P T B Clayton, to give him a place right in the heart of London's commercial life, contact with the sea and the river, and resources to use as he willed for Toc H and the Faith. How he served there for over 40 years is a story which will one day be recognised for what it was, a not inconsiderable influence in the ecumenical scene. He anticipated some of the practices of today, installing a Free Church curate among his staff, so that no avenue of belief might be ignored or unused,

A final word; Toc H has done and is doing work with individuals and groups of social rehabilitation of which it can be rightly proud. And it has always held to this truth, that the dimensions of our Toc H family are both horizontal (with men) and vertical (with God) – our faith is three – not two-dimensional, reaching upwards as well as outwards. I feel sure we have been right; do not let us lose it. And these four phrases we have considered over the past months: do we perchance *lessen* their impact by those adverbs? Take them away for a moment – we are committed to think, to love, to build and to witness. Hard work!

of Toc H, whether it be Branch life, project, residential weekend or life in a community house.

As an example, it is the standards of the Kingdom, the life of Christ himself that judges South Africa at present. Toc H has had a long involvement in that country, and as you read this there will be a small group of British volunteers continuing that involvement in a project with black and white South African volunteers in South Africa. That project is a small but real manifestation of the Kingdom of God. It will be taking enormous risks by challenging the evil of the apartheid regime, but in the words of Desmond Tutu, 'we cannot keep looking over our shoulders. I try to operate on the imperatives of the Gospel and if that leads to getting into trouble, then hard luck'. (Guardian, 14 June 1986). How similar those words are to the words of the apostles, when challenged by the authorities in the early days of the

Church. 'We must obey God rather than men.' (Act 5:29.) Of course, one small group of volunteers cannot change the course of a country, but as John Dickson writes of last year's project in South Africa, 'while we were there we did show that a group of 18 could live and work together as equals for a week. I would claim that we have made progress. To have a black man called Vusi Kaunda from Soweto, put his arm on my shoulder and call me Brother John will be something that I will always remember'. One small gesture perhaps, but a massive sign of the Kingdom. As Jesus says, *The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.* (Mat 13:31-32.)

It is often suggested that because Toc H is a Christian Movement then anybody

not demonstrating clear Christian commitment should be excluded. This misunderstands the aims of the founding fathers. Tubby's original statement, which corresponds to the Fourth Point reads 'To recognise the dominating claims of the spiritual factor in human life and to found on them a principle of reconciliation between man and man in the joy of service for the common good'. Certainly their motivation was the presence of the Risen Christ in all situations, and it is vital for the life of the Movement to remain true to that vision. However, Toc H isn't a church. For the baptised, Toc H should not be an alternative to church membership, but supplementary to it. It is clear that a wider membership was envisaged than committed Christians. The Movement witnesses to the standards of the Kingdom by asking people to join it in its life of fellowship and service. By doing so they discover the pains and joys of self giving, of crucifixion and resurrection.

WITNESS TODAY

Superstition - or Powerful Vision?

continued

There is room for people of all creeds and of none — Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, agnostics — Jesus came to all and apparently spent a good deal more time with those of no belief than with those pious professionals of the temple. He explains the Kingdom as a wheatfield in which there are weeds, but both wheat and weeds grow together, and again as a fishing net into which all are gathered. Only Jesus is the judge and we are all under judgment.

The task of Toc H is to witness to the Kingdom of God, by helping people to explore together its universal claims and to grow together as they discover the uncompromising love of the risen Christ. The methods will differ according to circumstance — *'we are not a club with fixed rules, nor do we specialise in any particular kind of voluntary service'*. (Membership card.) Wherever and with whoever the claims of the Kingdom present themselves, we are called to respond in whatever way is most fitting. Christian commitment has expressed itself in many ways, most often in the smallest and most insignificant manner, but if it has remained true to the Apostolic vision in Acts it has a power against which nothing and nobody in the world can stand.

'Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of The Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need.' (Acts 4:32-35.)

That vision of shared life, which is the Kingdom of God, is the vision to which all Toc H activity must point, whether it be Branch, project, weekend or community.

Kingdom of God — unnecessary superstition or powerful, challenging vision for all that we are?



The National Organisation for the Widowed and their Children

Cruse was founded in 1959, and set about the task of offering help and support to those who had recently lost a husband or wife. The need for this kind of work continues and grows, and 'Mary's Story' (which comes from Cruse) gives just one example of the work which is being done. It would, of course, be comparatively easy for Toc H Branches and Groups to help Cruse with fundraising, but far more in the spirit of Toc H to offer sensitive, practical help. If there is a branch of Cruse near you, why not see what help you can offer them — and if there's not, perhaps you can help start one. You may be sure of the need.

Mary's Story

This is a brief story, at least in its telling. Mary's husband died when he was 44, after an illness of a few days. Mary was 41. They had two children, a girl of 15 and a boy of 12. Both Mary's parents were dead. Her mother-in-law was a widow and lived over 80 miles away. Mary had not found it easy to make friends all her life and she had revelled in the social opportunities that came her way through her outgoing husband. Their move a few months ago to this new area, because of his promotion, was unsettling but she looked forward to making new friends and finding their niche in the community.

In a matter of days all this changed. Bill's death shattered her, closing down all prospects, leaving her and the children stranded without friends or family nearby. Mary could see no future at all and she hung on only for the sake of the children.

It is not clear how she heard of Cruse. Possibly something in the newspaper caught her eye or maybe one of her very few visitors, from Bill's firm, may have mentioned it. She did hear of it and, very uncertainly, wrote off for more information, beginning her letter 'I'm not sure if you can help...'

That letter was a small turning point for Mary. The information she received from Cruse made her begin to feel others understood a little of what she was going through. She wrote again and surprised

herself by pouring so much of her feelings on to paper. That very act made her load a little lighter. She kept on writing to Cruse and they to her. She enjoyed the monthly newsletter and obtained some of Cruse's specially written Fact Sheets. She began to correspond with two other Cruse members, one of them in her home town. Looking back she says that of all the help she received from Cruse the main thing was the reassurance that she and her grief were normal and that her children's grief was normal too.

Six months after contacting Cruse she heard that they were opening a new Branch in the neighbouring town. It was near enough, would she like to go and meet other widows and those who would be helping as volunteers. Not sure at first, and even more apprehensive as the day approached, she went — and that was another turning point.

All of this was just over a year ago. But it is not the end of the story. Mary and the children have just gone through the anniversary of Bill's death. They dreaded it but feel a little stronger having survived it. Mary has been greatly helped by a counsellor and feels she is no longer alone. There is a future for her and the children.

Mary is just one of the thousands of people Cruse helps every year. It was her lifeline during the difficult days. Just knowing it was there helped. Without Cruse Mary may not have survived.

Bereavement comes to all of us. We all know a Mary — or a Bill — in our family, or street, or organisation. Those who have other good and lasting support may not need Cruse but every day hundreds seek its help.

Cruse needs help too. To provide more counselling, open more local Branches, produce more special literature. Its work is unending because every day there are new widows, widowers and bereaved children.

A donation to Cruse will be well used. The donor may never be known by those who benefit from Cruse's help, nor donors know who is cared for as a result of their generosity — but her name could be Mary.

Cruse can be contacted at Cruse House, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1UR.

We will Remember...

We regret to announce the death of the following members:

In 1985 — not previously recorded
Olive A Allan (Birmingham District)
George A Grain (Leeds District)

In April
Doris M Trevelyan (Hereford J)

In May
Dora M Applin (Wimborne J)
Henry G Bastable (Eltham J)
Sarah G Beveridge (Denny J)
Gwendoline Brew (Southampton District)
Lena M Cheese (Exmouth W)
R F 'Cicely' Brooks (Newport W)
Alfred R Garland (Uckfield M)
Florence M Parry (Ashby de la Zouch W)
Edward Scholey (Coningsby J)
Andrew R Shiel (Skelmorlie & Wemyss J)

Margaret L Smith (Taunton J)
Philip Smith (Orston J)
Elsie M Vaughan (Llandrindod Wells J)

In June
G Smith (Uxbridge J)
James F Styles (High Brooms M)

Gwen Margetts who died in May was for 51 years a member of Toc H. In the 1930s she was one of Toc H's 'Young Hopefuls', a training ground for leadership. We who had the privilege of knowing her feel she was a great example to us. She will be long remembered by all who knew her, and we give thanks for her example of the Toc H way of spreading the word.

EP

Dora Applin, who died on 9 May, was a founder member of the Toc H League of Women Helpers. At her funeral service, which was attended by a large number of friends, Toc H members and representatives of other

organisations in Wimborne, Padre Lomax spoke of her as 'an outstanding person who dedicated her life to the service of others'. She had been Chairman and Pilot of Wimborne Joint Branch; she loved Toc H and set a good example for others to follow. We can indeed remember her with proud Thanksgiving.

PW

Mrs Margaret Smith died quite suddenly in May. She was a loyal and devoted member, formerly at the Wellington Branch for many years until she moved to Taunton a few years ago. She became our Pilot, a role which fitted her kindly and sympathetic nature. She had the true Toc H spirit of giving and will be very greatly and sadly missed.

DC

Jim Styles, who had been the Pilot of High Brooms Branch, has died following an accident. Jim, will be missed by all his pals at the Branch for his stories, his leadership and for his great belief in the Christian life. We will remember him.

AH

We give thanks for their lives

Photo: Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph



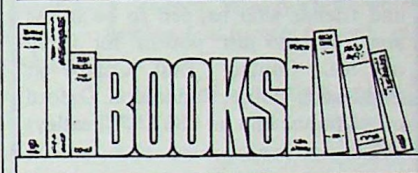
Toc H came to Rushden, Northants, in 1936 when a group was formed by a few local men. Today there is a Men's Branch, three Women's Branches and a further Women's Branch which meets in the afternoon once a month, a total in all of over 90 members. It was decided that to mark the 50th Anniversary this year a day of Jubilee Celebrations would be held on 8 March, and these proved to be a great success. About 180 members and friends attended. A Service of Thanksgiving and Re-dedication was conducted by the Branch Padre, John Weaver, with Colin Rudd as Guest Speaker. This was followed by a wonderful Toc H tea prepared by the ladies, and an entertainment by local singers.

Perhaps it was fitting that this happy day came very shortly after the Branches had concluded the purchase of their own room, even though it has still to be paid for.



Please Note

The 'Corndene' advertisement on p15 July issue, telephone number should read Ludlow (0584) 890324. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.



'Christian Crackers (2)'

Phil Mason has gone into humour in a big way, and you don't HAVE to be a Christian to enjoy his latest booklet. Anecdotes from all over the country relate the funnier side of church life seen from many angles. I'm not quoting any — when you can read it for yourself for the modest sum of 60p.

'Christmas Thoughts'

This is a delightful card-sized publication to send (in place of the usual greetings card) to friends to enjoy over the Christmas holiday period, and as a keepsake for the days ahead. This comes complete with envelope at 35p.

Both from Norheimsund Books & Cards, 1 Whitney Road, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Northants NN15 SSL.

Eileen Clark

Sittingbourne Branch ran a stall at the market which raised £45 towards a coach trip for housebound people.

1987 Diaries!

These will be available later this month at the same price as last year, £1 including postage. It is once again a slim-line version, with Sunday start, and containing the usual essential Toc H information and addresses. Colour green.

Please order from Toc H Publications Department, 1 Forest Close, Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 6BT.

Cuddesdon House

Cuddesdon House is available to Toc H members and friends for bed and breakfast accommodation. Situated close to Oxford, it makes a good Centre for your holiday. Because the Centre is normally used for Conferences we are unable to accept individual bookings at more than a fortnight's notice – but if you want a break at short notice, try us.

We are also very glad to see members and friends who happen to be in the area and who just 'pop in' for a cup of tea. Contact Paul Cullip, at Cuddesdon House, Cuddesdon, Oxford or telephone him on 08677 (Wheatley) 2004.

Open Forum

National Youth Weekend

Thank you to all those who arranged the recent National Youth Weekend at Port Penrhyn – and thank you to all those who came and made it a weekend I will not forget in a hurry! I don't believe the owners of the many children who had their faces painted will forget it in a hurry either and neither will the owners of the Liverpool Arms. The Raft Race, which was the main event of the weekend, finished there – and we had been on their doorstep selling raffle tickets and programmes since 9.30am. My main regret is that I had not attended an event of this size before! Meeting so many people really did bring out the feeling of the First Point – if you see what I mean.

Thank you all for making it such a great weekend.

Julie Canning
Newbury

The Ordination of Women

It is very interesting to note that in 'The Times' dated 5 July 1920, at the Lambeth Conference two of the main concerns were Unity and 'the future state of women in the organisation of the Church'. Noting that women now held positions in most professions, the comment was made 'Let not the Church

break away from this offering of great enthusiasm or find itself unable to adapt old machinery to new uses'. We are still waiting for the machinery to adapt!

Nancy Rennie
Ravensthorpe

In my earlier letter I said I regretted that it should be needful to discuss the matter of women for the priesthood in *Point Three* – but as the correspondence is still going on, I feel reluctantly compelled to try to answer some points.

J R Morgan dismisses the opposition to women priests as based on a 'parochial' view, but the view held by the Orthodox, the Roman Catholics, the Old Catholics and a large number within the Anglican Communion can hardly be described as 'parochial'. He speaks in a vague and general sort of way of little historical basis of support; but can he produce a single instance of the ordination of a woman to the priesthood (presbyterate) from the first or second centuries?

Not being an Anglican, Mr Morgan may not be aware that fairly often nowadays the Chalice is passed round from hand to hand, and thus one does frequently receive it at a woman's hand. While this is not a custom that I am much enamoured of, I see no serious objection to it, and I agree that 'the meaning' is

Forthcoming Events

August

2-9	Project 27, Mundesley Sandcastles	Open
2-9	Project 28, St Michael's Cheshire Home Axbridge	Open
2-9	Project 29, Playscheme at Lowestoft	Open
2-16	Project 30, Token Project, Herts	Open
4-8	Project 46, Children's Holiday, Colsterdale	Open
6-27	Project 31, Munster Playscheme	Open
9-16	Project 32, Happy Families, Mundesley	Open
9-16	Project 33, Children's Camp, Blakeney	Open
9-18	Project 34, Hitchin Hoot	Open
9-23	Project 35, Holiday for Mentally Handicapped at Matlock	Open
11-22	Project 36, Playscheme at Saltburn-on-Sea	Open
15-17	Photography/Painting weekend, Kingsteignton	Open
15-22	Project 37, Princess Marina Centre, Bucks	Open

16-24	Project 38, Basingstoke Playscheme	Open
16-30	Project 39, Sheffield Playscheme	Open
19-24	Toc H Training and Video Week, Kingsteignton	Open
26-30	A Little of What you Fancy! Kingsteignton	Open

29-31	Cycling Tour of Oxfordshire, from Cuddesdon	Open
30-6 Sept	Project 40, Mountain Rescue in South Wales	Open

September

6	North Wales & North West REC	
19/20	South Western Regional Council at Kingsteignton	
26-28	Practical Drama weekend, Kingsteignton	Open
26-28	Quiet Weekend, Cuddesdon	Open

October

4	Area Rally, Harpenden, Herts	Open
4	Festival of Music, Manchester	Open
4-11	Project 43, Caring and Sharing Holiday Ashwellthorpe Hall, Norfolk	Open
11	North Wales & North West Regional Council	
18	Southern Regional Council	
24-26	Notts & Derby Area Weekend, Alison House	

not changed. It is not to a woman as distributor of the sacrament that objection is raised, but as consecrator.

What is there 'ironic' about a woman Prime Minister's part in the appointment of bishops? The matter for us is ruled by the 37th article of religion, 'We give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word or of the Sacraments'. When the Prime Minister (on behalf of 'the Prince' ie the Queen) forwards a name to a Cathedral Chapter for election, she is not performing a sacerdotal act, and so there is no cause for exclamation or objection. We desire to uphold the universal Catholic tradition concerning the priesthood — we are not harbouring prejudice concerning women in general.

R L Cole
Cardiff

The Old House

In April of this year I was fortunate enough to go to Poperinge with a party organised by John Burgess. It was a wonderful experience being in the Old House, so full of history, memories and of Tubby himself. Meeting Toc H Belgium members was also an added interest and pleasure, and the young man, who looks after the running of the House, was still another pleasure. He was so helpful and just could not do enough for

us. He even organised a broadcast song and message for us on the morning we were leaving and presented all the ladies with a rosebud!

John was excellent in every way. I cannot speak too highly of the way in which he organised the trips, which we so much enjoyed, although mixed with a certain amount of sadness when visiting the War Cemeteries. He was such a good guide, great company and nothing was a trouble to him. He looked after us so well and we are very grateful to him for this trip and for all the hard work he put into it.

Olive Child
London W4

Friendship Circles

In conversation with a member of one of the Friendship Circles in Cleveland, I realised that what Ann Crouch had written about Friendship Circles in your editorial comment was capable of being understood in a way that I feel sure she did not intend. I refer to her words 'we do not use volunteers to run the group'. Taken out of context it could appear that volunteers, as distinct from former patients are not involved or necessary to the actual running of the groups.

I am certain that Ann did not intend this meaning, because we all know that the involvement of discharged

patients is one of the more important methods of achieving the objective of their total rehabilitation.

In Ann's statement if the word 'run' is emphasised rather than 'volunteer' the statement is clearly understandable to those involved in the groups.

That is, that although both former patients and others are involved in Friendship Circles, the running of the Circle is not the responsibility solely or exclusively of those who have never been patients. At least that is how the constitution of the Friendship Circles is envisaged by Toc H, and nobody knows this better than Ann.

She clearly intends this because she goes on to say, 'In a Friendship Circle everyone is a member on equal terms regardless of their mental history'.

In my experience as an MSC worker who has been involved in every one of the Circles in Cleveland, I can see that what Ann has written in this respect is true and actually happens in most Circles. In fact the blend of former patients and other members in the circle running and leading the circle is so good that although I am a former patient myself, I cannot always tell which member helping is a former patient, and who is not.

John Tucker
Cleveland



Congratulations to Uckfield Branch, who recently celebrated their 40th anniversary.

Toc H in Stalag VIIIB

Ken Prideaux-Brune

Harry Hagan, from Moretonhampstead in Devon, was initiated into membership on 7 January 1944 by the Toc H Group in Stalag VIIIB in Lamsdorf, Germany. He now lives in Harrow Weald, Middlesex, and has just sent to Wendover for safe keeping the log and minute book of this Group. And a most remarkable story they have to tell.

The Group owed its foundation to a military policeman named Cyril Llewellyn. Cyril had belonged to a flourishing Toc H Group in Stalag VIB in Westphalia. When he was transferred to Lamsdorf in April 1942 he took with him a Rushlight in the hope that he would be able to start a Group in his new Camp. Initial reactions were discouraging. It's been tried before and didn't work, he was told. Nonetheless he inserted an invitation to a meeting in the Camp Notices and five members, together with one man who had been a probationer before joining the army, turned up. A skeleton committee was formed and the first job undertaken – the copying out of 200 hymn sheets for a church service.

The new Group was generally regarded as a nine day wonder but a week later, on 17 May, 16 people came to the meeting. By 6 June this had grown to 24. Later in June the first official meeting was held ('with a probationers class of 16 we felt justified in calling ourselves a Group'). In July a letter was received from Barclay Baron at Toc H Headquarters recognising the new Group and authorising the initiation of new members. The first 16 new members were initiated on 12 September and initiations took place regularly over the next three years.

It was in September that the Group launched what was to be its major job. An appeal for surplus clothing and toilet requisites was made, followed by a 'house to house' collection. The items were distributed to newly arrived RAF personnel and to commandos and Canadian troops captured at Dieppe.

Stalag VIIIB had a 'school', through which many men gained qualifications that were valuable to them after the war was over. It was in the school building that the weekly Toc H meetings, with guest speakers or debates, were held.

Late in September 1942, a business meeting took the following decision: 'A new committee shall be elected every three months and to enable more

members to gain experience of committee work it was decided that no member would be re-elected for a second period of office' – a rule which stood until December 1943, when it was amended to allow re-election.

Two days later six members were transferred to Stalag 383. A Rushlight was dedicated for them to take with them and they established a flourishing Group in their new camp.

October 1942 was a very difficult month. Reprisals were in force and all compounds were locked. *'The few members in each compound got together in any odd corner and kept the spirit of the Group alive. The few members not tied up did excellent work visiting and taking messages from one to another. Great work was done among the Canadians at this time which brought many friends when the gates were opened and meetings resumed.'*

In February 1943 the Group received a letter from East Molesley Branch *'which conveyed greetings and news of this Group being adopted by them'*.

Meanwhile the collections of clothing and other items had become so large that a store had become necessary and the Camp Leader 'co-operated with us in procuring this'. On 20 March, for instance, it was recorded that 3,000 garments, 42,500 cigarettes and 28lb of tobacco had been sent to the camp hospital. Members at this time were also busy visiting the sick, meeting new arrivals, scrubbing benches and tables at the school and helping out at an arts and crafts exhibition.

By this time the original founder of the Group, Cyril Llewellyn, had been sent away to a work party and had formed a Toc H Group there. In April he reported that the new Group had adopted 15 Russian soldiers ('Joe's boys') on a neighbouring work party, supplying them with clothing, cigarettes and soap.

In May 1943 the first birthday party of the Group was held, attended by 65 people. In June there was a sudden influx of POWs from Italy. The school was turned into a barracks and throughout the summer the Group had to meet in the open air. In the autumn, when this was no longer feasible, the Group obtained the use of a small office, cramped but at least dry. The new arrivals exhausted the

stocks of clothing and toilet requisites and another 'house to house' collection was undertaken.

In August the receipt of a parcel of Toc H literature from Headquarters was recorded. In October the Group started a new job. Hair cutting equipment was obtained so that a member, who was a barber, could give free haircuts to new arrivals.

By this time a number of County Associations has been formed in the camp. They were also distributing clothing and as a result there was a certain amount of overlapping. Toc H took the lead in calling a meeting of all concerned and this work was from then on taken over by a Camp Comforts Committee, in which Toc H members played an important part.

On 5 November, we are told, *'a very interesting and enlightening talk on India was given by our Indian friend, Shir Mohamed. Shir Mohamed was a stallholder on Block II and, as a token of respect and friendship for the Group, donated half his profits to the Toc H Comforts Fund. Shir set us an example of utter selflessness and we were very sorry to lose him when the Indians were moved to another stalag'*.

On 12 December 1943 there was a special meeting in church for the World Chain of Light. On Christmas Eve there were carols sung by the camp choir, followed by short talks on Christmas customs by members from South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, Australia and the UK.

On 14 January 1944 it was reported that two members had been found to carry on the Toc H hairdressing salon. On 4 February work started on a banner, which was displayed, complete, on 24 March. (This, too, has now come to Wendover for safe keeping.)

On 26 August Toc H organised a camp concert attended by 400 people. But by September, we are told, *'the general opinion in the camp was that the war would be over by Christmas, and a certain amount of apathy crept in. Why make plans which victory would cancel?' The lack of new prisoners also meant that there was 'quite a little unemployment problem in the camp'*. However, some members were busy darning socks for men who, through injury, were unable to darn their own and making wire supports to keep bedclothes off men with injured legs.

The evacuation of Stalag VIIIB began on 23 January 1945. This was a chaotic time. It was left to the prisoners

Personality Point

The following new members were registered during June:

Mrs Georgina R Henderson (Alloa J)
 Mrs Mary Gornal (Ashby-de-la-Zouch W)
 Mrs Norah Petty (Broughton Astley W)
 Jonathan Wheeler (Central Branch)
 Mr Fred Leese (Charlton J)
 Miss Gaioa Strunkis (Chirk W)
 Alfred J Eade (Ely J), Stuart J Wheeler
 (Gloucester J) Stanley A Marsh (Goring
 by Sea M), Ernest W Glover (Jedburgh M)
 Ronald Bates (Lindley M), Frederick A
 Hughes (Looe M), Miss Ira Roberts
 (Northants District), Ronald Gunter,
 Arthur McCalla, Francis Burgess (Purton
 M), Ernest Cropper, Mrs Annie Cropper
 (Rhyl North J), Miss Demelza J A Lewis
 (South West Counties Branch),
 Clinton Sear, Iain Sear, Mrs Remia Sear
 (Thurrock J), Phyllis I Dunmore
 (Wroughton W).

A warm welcome to 23 new members

Congratulations!

to **Georges Verstraete**, the Treasurer of the Talbot House Association and Town Clerk of Poperinge, on being awarded the MBE.

to **Guy Gruwez**, who is Chairman of the Last Post Committee in Ypres. Guy is responsible for the daily ceremony at the Menin Gate which so many Toc H members and friends have found so moving. Like Georges, he also has been awarded the MBE.

themselves to decide whether to go or to stay and risk the shells of the advancing Russian armies. Some of the Group's papers were lost at this time and the remainder were divided among the members in the hope that they would get home that way. They did. Harry Hagan kept them safe through the intervening years and he has now entrusted them to Headquarters.

The last Toc H meeting in Lamsdorf was held on 16 February 1945. The remaining prisoners were then moved west and eventually liberated. The log's own laconic summary of the life of this remarkable Toc H Group cannot be bettered: *'We had been a Group for nearly three years. Over 200 POWs had passed through our records. Much good work had been done and many men helped in all sorts of ways during their stay in VIIIB.'*



Photo: Mike Dean

A special Gold Award was made to Wyn Roberts to mark over 30 years of service to the National Association of Boys Clubs.

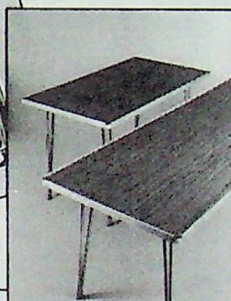
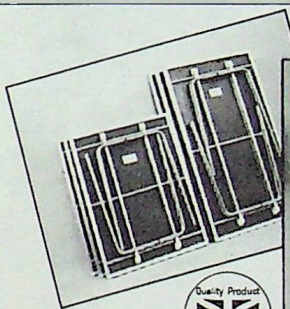
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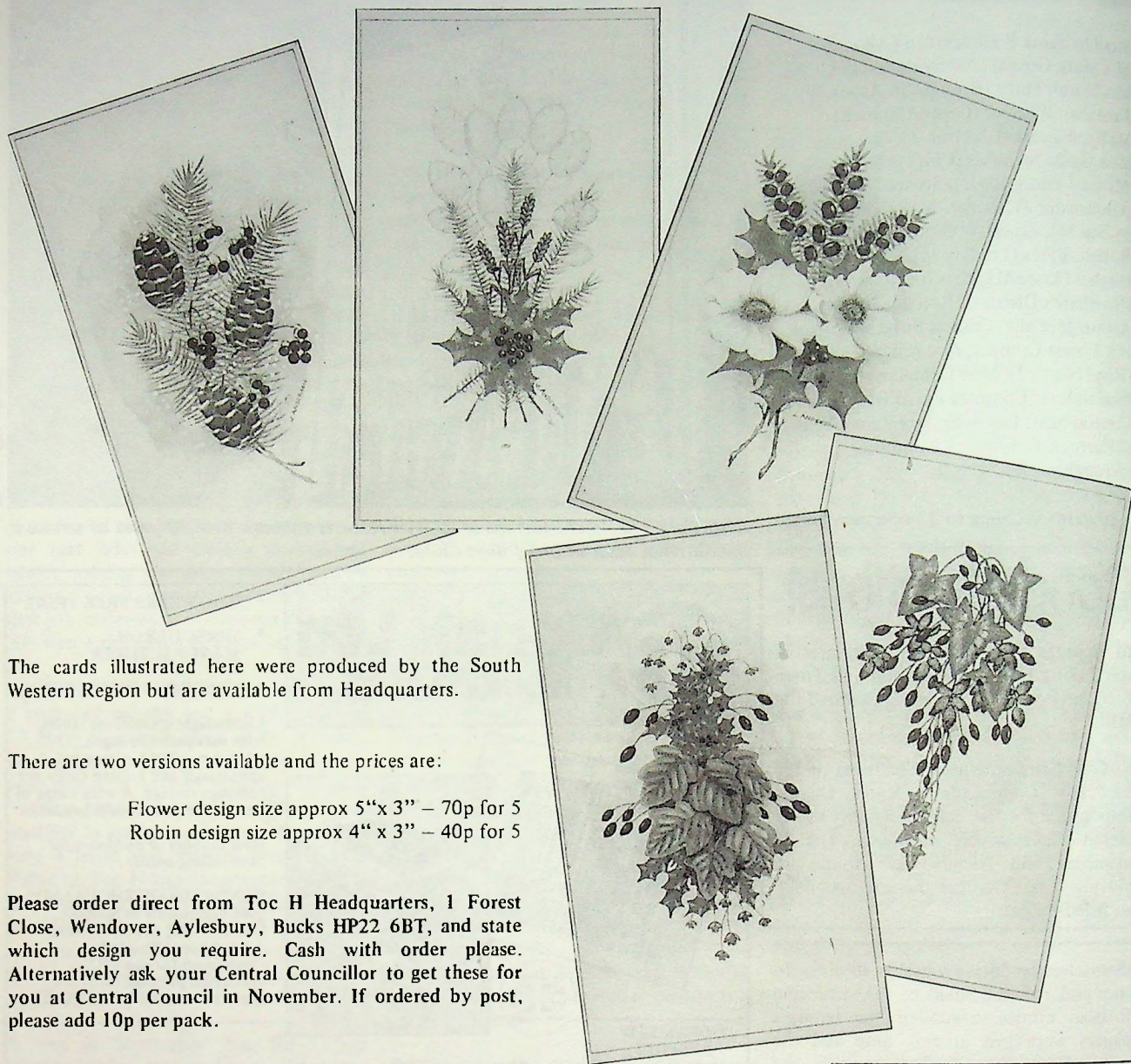
Small advertisements must be received (with remittance) five weeks before publication day, which is the 23rd of the preceding month. The charge is 5p a word (minimum 50p) plus VAT, to Point Three Magazine. Rates of display advertisements can be obtained from the Editorial Office, Toc H, 1 Forest Close, Wendover. Telephone: 0296 623911.

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Toc H Christmas Cards



The cards illustrated here were produced by the South Western Region but are available from Headquarters.

There are two versions available and the prices are:

Flower design size approx 5" x 3" – 70p for 5

Robin design size approx 4" x 3" – 40p for 5

Please order direct from Toc H Headquarters, 1 Forest Close, Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 6BT, and state which design you require. Cash with order please. Alternatively ask your Central Councillor to get these for you at Central Council in November. If ordered by post, please add 10p per pack.

There will be another set of Christmas Cards produced by the South Eastern Region featured in a later issue.

